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PROVIDENCE

AND

FREE AGENCY,

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S E R M O N

PROVIDENCE AND FREE AGENCY.

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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL,

APRIL 17th, 1778.

BEING GOOD-FRIDAY.

BY SAMUEL HORSLEY, LL.D.

Secretary to the ROYAL SOCIETY; and Chaplain to the Right Rev.
Father in God ROBERT Lord Bishop of LONDON.

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PROVIDENCE AND FREE AGENCY

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF BATH

APRIL 17TH 1874



BEING GOOD FRIDAY

BY SAMUEL JOSEPH WILKINSON

Secretary to the Royal Society; and Chaplain to the Right Hon.
Father in God the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

LONDON

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MATTHEW XVI. 21.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief-priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

THE saying of the prophet, "that the ways and thoughts of God are not like those of men," was never more remarkably verified, than in that great Event which we This day commemorate, the Death and Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Without controversy, "*Great is the mystery of godliness!*" Wonderful in every part, but chiefly in the last acts of it, was the scheme of man's Redemption! That the Author of Life should himself be made subject unto Death; that the Lord of Glory should be cloathed with shame; that the Son of God's Love should become a Curse for sinful man; that his sufferings and humiliation should be made the manifestation of his Glory; that by stooping to Death he should conquer Death; that the Cross should lift him to his Throne; that the height of human Malice should but accomplish the purposes of God's Mercy; that the Devil, in the persecutions

he raised against our Lord, should be the instrument of his own final ruin ; These were Mysteries in the doctrine of the Cross, so contrary to the confirmed prejudices of the Jewish people, and so far above the reach of philosophical investigation, that they rendered the preaching of a crucified Saviour *a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness*. God, foreseeing how improbable this doctrine would appear to men, was pleased in various ways to typify and predict our Saviour's passion, ages before it happened ; that the thing, when it should come to pass, might be known to be His work and counsel : and our Lord himself omitted not, at the proper season, to give his disciples the most explicit warning of it ; that an event so contrary to every thing they had expected (for they were involved in the common error of the Jewish nation concerning the Messiah) might not come upon them by surprise. *From that time forth, saith the Evangelist, Jesus began to shew to his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief-priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

From that time forth—The fact last mentioned was that conversation of our Lord with his disciples, in which Peter declared, in the name of all, that while the people in general were in doubt who Jesus might be, whether Elias, or Jeremias, or some other of the antient prophets revived, they his constant followers believed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. *From that time forth*, it seems, and not before, Jesus began to advertise his disciples of his approaching death. It was a thing not to be disclosed till their faith had attained to some degree of constancy and firmness. But when once it appeared that they not only esteemed and loved their

Master as a wise and virtuous man, that they not only revered him as an inspired teacher of righteousness, but that they believed in him as the Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of Israel; it then became seasonable to remove the prejudices in which they had been educated, and to shew them plainly what that deliverance was, which the promised Messiah was to work; for whom, and by what means, it was to be effected. It was time to extinguish their hopes of sharing in the splendors of an earthly kingdom, and to prepare and fortify their minds against all that *contradiction of sinners*, which they, with their Master, were, in this world, destined to endure. Now therefore he begins to shew them how that he *must* go to Jerusalem; and, after much malicious persecution from the leaders of the Jewish people, he *must* be killed. The form of expression here is very remarkable in the original, and it is well preserved in our English translation. He *must* go, he *must* suffer, he *must* be killed, he *must* be raised again on the third day. All these things were fixed and determined—must inevitably be—nothing could prevent them—and yet the greater part of them were of a kind that might *seem* to depend entirely upon *man's* free-agency. To go or not to go to Jerusalem was in his own power, and the persecution he met with there, arising from the folly and the malice of ignorant and wicked men, surely depended upon human will; yet, by the form of the sentence, these things are included under the same Necessity of Event, as that which was evidently an immediate effect of Divine Power without the concurrence of any other cause, the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The words which in the original express the *going*, the *suffering*, the *being killed*, the *being raised again*, are all equally subject to the verb, which answers to the word *must* of our language,

and in its first and proper meaning predicates Necessity. As he *must* be raised on the third day, so he *must* go, he *must* suffer, he *must* be killed. Every one of these events, his going to Jerusalem, his suffering, and his death there; and that these sufferings, and that death, should be brought about by the malice of the Elders and Chief-priests and Scribes; every one of these things is plainly announced, as no less unalterably fixed, than the Resurrection of our Saviour, or the Time of his resurrection, that it was to happen on the third day.

THE previous Certainty of things to come is one of those truths which are not easily comprehended. The difficulty seems to arise from a habit that we have of measuring all intellectual powers by the standard of human intellect. There is nothing in the nature of Certainty, abstractedly considered, to connect it with past time or with the present, more than with the future. But human knowledge extends in so small a degree to future things, that scarce any thing becomes certain to *us*, till it is come to pass; and therefore we are apt to imagine that things *acquire* their certainty *from* their accomplishment. But this is a gross fallacy. The proof of an event to us always depends either upon the testimony of others, or the evidence of our own senses; but the Certainty of events in themselves arises from their natural connection with their proper causes. Hence to that Great Being, who knows things, not by testimony, not by sense, but by their causes, as being himself the First cause, the source of power and activity to all other causes, to Him every thing, that shall ever be, is at all times infinitely more certain, than any thing either past or present can be to any man, except perhaps the simple fact of his own existence, and some of those necessary truths which are evidenced

denced to every man, not by his bodily senses, but by that internal perception which seems to be the first act of created intellect.

This Certainty however is to be carefully distinguished from a true *Necessity* inherent in the nature of the thing. A thing is *necessary*, when the idea of existence is included in the idea of the thing, as an inseparable part of it. Thus God is necessary—The mind cannot think of him at all without thinking of him as existent. The very notion and name of an *Event* excludes this Necessity, which belongs only to things uncaused. The events of the created universe are *certain*, because sufficient causes *do*, not because they *must*, act to their production. God *knows* this certainty, because he knows the action of all these causes ; in as much as he himself begins it, and perfectly comprehends those mutual Connections between the things he hath created, which render *this* a Cause, and *that* its Effect.

But the mere certainty of things to come, including in it even human actions, is not all that is implied in the terms of our Lord's prediction ; which plainly intimate that the actions of men, even their worst actions, are in some measure comprized in the design of Providence ; who, although he wills not the evil of any single act, undoubtedly wills the good in which the whole system of created agency shall ultimately terminate.

On these views of things, and in particular on our Saviour's prediction of his sufferings, in which these views are most strongly set forth, the Calvinistic Divines endeavoured to establish their hard doctrine of arbitrary predestination ; a doctrine, to which, whether we consider it in itself,

self, or in its consequences, we may with good reason apply the words of the Prophet, *It hath truly little form or comeliness, little beauty, that we should desire it.* But let us not judge uncharitably of those who maintained it, nor ascribe to a morose severity of temper, much less to spiritual pride, what is easily traced to nobler principles. The Calvinistic Predestinarians had found in the scriptures, both of the Old and of the New Testament, the most explicit assertions of God's Omniscience, and of his constant attention to the minutest occurrences both of the natural and of the moral world. These notions they found agreeable, we must not say to philosophy—for of that these pious men had but a scanty portion—but to what in many cases is a better guide, to the Natural Sense and Feeling of a virtuous mind. The belief that the World, and they themselves as a part of it, were under the immediate care and protection of the Wisest and the Best of Beings, had taken possession of their honest Hearts, more firmly than it seems to do of some men's Understandings, and they set themselves to combat with the fiercest zeal, and without any scrupulous examination, every doctrine that might seem to contradict it, and threaten to rob them of the holy joy and comfort which flowed from that persuasion. They did not understand that the Fore-knowledge and Providence of the Deity, and that Liberty, which doth truly belong to man as a moral agent, are things perfectly consistent and naturally connected. They did not hesitate a moment to deny the freedom of human actions.—

But this was a dangerous error. For in truth the proof of our Liberty is to every individual of the human race the very same, I am persuaded, with the proof of his Existence. *I feel that I exist, and I feel that I am free;* and I may with reason turn a deaf ear upon every argument that can be alledged in either case

case to disprove my feelings. I feel that I have power to flee the danger that I dread; to pursue the pleasure that I covet; to forego the most inviting pleasure, although it be actually within my grasp, if I apprehend that the present enjoyment may be the means of future mischief; To expose myself to present danger; To submit to present evils, in order to secure the possession of a future good. I feel that I have power to do the action I approve, to abstain from another that my conscience would condemn. In a word, I feel that I act from my own hopes, my own fears, my own internal perceptions of moral fitnesses and incongruities. Happy! Thrice Happy they, who act invariably by these perceptions! They have attained to the *Glorious Liberty of the sons of God!* But whenever I act from other motives, I feel that I am misled by my own passions, my own appetites, my own mistaken views of things. A feeling always succeeds these unreasonable actions, that had my mind exerted its natural powers, in considering the action I was about to do, the propriety of it in itself, and its consequences, I might and I should have acted otherwise. Having these feelings, I feel all that liberty, which renders the Morality of a man's actions properly his own, and makes him justly accountable for his conduct.

The Liberty therefore of Man, and the Foreknowledge and Providence of God, are equally certain; although the proof of each rests on different principles. Our *feelings* prove to every one of us that we are free. Reason and Revelation teach us, that the Deity knows and governs all things. That even *the thoughts of man be understood long* before; long before the thoughts arise, long before the man himself is born who is to think them. Now, when two distinct propositions

positions are separately proved, each by its proper evidence, it is not a reason for denying either, that the human mind, upon the first hasty view, imagines a repugnance, and may perhaps find a difficulty in connecting them, even after the distinct proof of each is clearly perceived and understood. There is a wide difference between a Paradox and a Contradiction. Both indeed consist of two distinct propositions, and so far only are they alike. For of the two parts of a Contradiction the one or the other must necessarily be false: of a Paradox both are often true; and yet when proved to be true, may continue paradoxical. This is the necessary consequence of our partial views of things. An Intellect to which nothing should be paradoxical, would be infinite. It may naturally be supposed that paradoxes must abound the most in Metaphysics and Divinity; *For who can find out God unto perfection?* yet they occur in other subjects; and any one, who should universally refuse his assent to propositions separately proved, because when connected they may seem paradoxical, would, in many instances, be justly laughed to scorn by the masters of those sciences, which make the highest pretensions to certainty and demonstration. In all these cases there is generally in the nature of things a Limit to each of the two contrasted propositions, beyond which neither can be extended without implying the falshood of the other, and changing the paradox into a contradiction; and the whole difficulty of perceiving the connection and agreement between such propositions, arises from this circumstance, that, by some inattention of the mind, these limits are overlooked. Thus, in the case before us; we must not imagine such an Arbitrary exercise of God's Power over the Minds and Wills of subordinate agents, as should convert Rational beings into mere Machines, and leave the Deity charged with

with the follies and the crimes of Men; which was the error of the Calvinists: nor must we, on the other hand, set up such a Liberty of created beings, as, necessarily precluding the divine foreknowledge of human actions, should take the government of the Moral World out of the hands of God, and leave him nothing to do with the noblest part of his creation; which hath been, perhaps, the worse error of some who have opposed the Calvinists.

There is yet another Error upon this subject, which, I think, took its rise among professed Infidels, and to them, till of late, it hath been entirely confined. But some have appeared among its modern advocates, actuated, I am persuaded, for their writings on this subject witness it, by the same humble Spirit of resigned Devotion, which gave birth to the plan of arbitrary Predestination. Deeply versed in Physics, which the Calvinists neglected, these men wish to reconcile the notions of God's Arbitrary Dominion, which they in common with the Calvinists maintain, with what the others entirely overlooked, the regular operation of Second Causes; and in this circumstance lies the chief if not the whole difference, between the PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY of our subtle Moderns, and the Predestination of their more simple Ancestors. And so far as these Necessarians maintain the certain influence of Moral Motives, as the natural and sufficient means whereby human actions, and even human thoughts, are brought into that continued chain of Causes and Effects, which, taking its beginning in the Operations of the Infinite Mind, cannot but be fully understood by him; so far they do Service to the Cause of Truth, placing the "Great and Glorious" Doctrines of Fore-knowledge and Providence—Absolute Fore-knowledge, Universal Providence—upon a firm and philosophical

phical Foundation. A thing to be wished with respect to every Doctrine of any practical Importance, whenever, as in this case, the great Obscurity of the Subject renders the interpretation of Texts of Scripture dubious, which otherwise, taken as they ought to be, in the plainest and the most natural meaning of the words, might be decisive. But when they go beyond this, when they would represent this influence of Moral Motives, as arising from a Physical Necessity, the very same with that which excites and governs the Motions of the inanimate Creation; here they confound Nature's distinctions, and contradict the very Principles they would seem to have established. The source of their mistake is this; that they imagine a Similitude between things which admit of no comparison; between the Influence of a moral Motive upon Mind, and that of mechanical Force upon Matter. A Moral Motive and a Mechanical Force, are both indeed Causes; and equally certain Causes each of its proper Effect. But they are Causes in very different senses of the word, and derive their energy from the most opposite Principles. Force is only another Name for an *efficient* Cause; it is that which impresses motion upon Body, the passive recipient of a foreign impulse. A Moral Motive is what is more significantly called the *final* Cause, and can have no influence but with a Being that proposes to itself an end, chooses means, and thus *puts itself* in action. It is true, that while *this* is my *end*, and while I conceive *these* to be the *means*, a definite act will as certainly follow that definite choice and judgment of my mind, provided I be free from all external restraint and impediment, as a determinate Motion will be excited in a body by a Force applied in a given direction. There is in both cases an equal certainty of the Effect; but the Principle of the Certainty, in the one case, and in the other, is entirely different: which difference necessarily arises from the

different nature of final and efficient Causes. Every cause (except it be the Will of the Deity acting to the first production of substances, every cause I say, except this acting in this singular instance) produces its effect by acting *upon* something; and, whatever be the cause that acts, the Principle of Certainty lies in a capacity, in the thing on which it acts, of being affected by that action. Now the Capacity which Force, or an Efficient cause, requires in the object of its action, is absolute Inertness. But Intelligence and Liberty constitute the Capacity of being influenced by a Final Cause, by a Moral Motive; and to this very Liberty does this sort of Cause owe its whole Efficacy, the whole Certainty of its Operation; which Certainty never can disprove the existence of that Liberty, upon which it is itself founded, and of which it affords the highest evidence.

These distinctions, between the Efficient and the Final Cause, being once understood, we may from the Necessarians own principles deduce the firmest proof of the Liberty of Man. For since God fore-knows and governs future events, so far as subordinate agents are concerned in them, by the means of Moral Motives, that is, by Final Causes; since these are the Engines, by which he turns and weilds the Intellectual World, bending the perverse Wills of Wicked Men and of Apostate Spirits to his purpose; and since these Motives owe their Energy, their whole Success, to the Liberty of the Beings that are governed by them; it is, in consequence, most certain, however it may seem most strange, that God could not govern the world as he does, by final causes, if Man were not free; no more than he could govern the material part of it mechanically, by efficient causes, if Matter were not wholly passive.—The Necessarian does not listen to this argument. He has furnished himself with an expedient to make room

For the Physical Necessity he would introduce into what has been called the Moral World. His expedient is neither more nor less than this, that he would annihilate the Moral World altogether. He denies the Existence of the Immaterial Principle in Man, and would stamp the very Form of human Intellect, that living Image of the Divinity, upon the passive Substance of the Brain! It seems the notion of an active principle distinct from the body, the true cause of voluntary motion, possessing in itself the faculties of Thought, Desire, Volition, and necessarily surviving the body, which principle should much more truly than the body constitute the man; all this was a phantom of Heathen Philosophy, which a Christian, for that reason in particular, should discard. It is a new kind of argument against the truth of a proposition, which a man might otherwise be disposed to receive; that it hath been asserted and maintained by Wise and Good and Learned men, who had spent a great part of their lives in thinking most intensely upon the subject. This is a *new way* of managing the topic of Authorities. When in the ardour of controversy a man alledges such an argument as this, he is seldom perhaps aware, how little he is himself in earnest in it. How nugatory it would appear to him in any other but that particular instance, wherein it happens to serve his purpose; how absurd, were it once turned against him. That acute writer, who would expunge the doctrine of an Immaterial Soul and its Immortality from the Creed of a Christian, because many who were destitute of the assistances of Revelation, were brought by the meer light of Nature to believe it, does not, I am well persuaded, the less firmly believe the Being and the Providence of God, because in that belief he happens to concur with Socrates and Plato.

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Let us turn to a meditation more adapted to this holy season. Let the pious Christian in every thing look up to God, with full assurance of Faith, as to the first Mover and Cause of all things—the Director of all Events—the Vigilant Guardian and Omnipotent Protector of the Virtuous ; but let him no less firmly believe, that the Morality of his actions is His Own—that he is free to stand and free to fall—That if he fall, the Blame is with Himself—in his own foolish choice.—God is blameless^a.

According to this state of things, in which every thing is subject to the wise controul of God, and Human Actions, and even the Liberty of human actions, are constituent parts of the wonderfully-complex scheme of Providence; according to this state of things, so evidently implied in our Saviour's prediction of his sufferings, every thing fell out in exact agreement, not only with this prediction, but also with the ancient predictions of the Jewish Prophets, and with the still more ancient types of the Mosaic law ; and yet every thing was brought about by the ordinary operation of Second Causes, and, in great part, by the free-agency of man. At the Season of the Passover, our blessed Lord, whose present condition of Humanity imposed upon him an implicit obedience to the positive precepts of the Mosaic Law, which Law was not yet abolished, was carried by motives of Devotion to Jerusalem. The Chief-Priests and Scribes assembled with the Elders in the hall of Caiphas the High-Priest, to concert the safest measures of destroying him. These men, in consideration of their Worldly Interests, had reason to dread the success of our Saviour's doctrine. There was nothing against which he had waged more

^a Αἰτία ἐλομένη. Θεὸς ἀναίτιος.

constant war, than that system of Hypocrisy and Superstition, by which they had disfigured the true Religion, and had enslaved the minds of the simple multitude. He had studiously improved every occasion of insisting upon the futility of their traditions, the vanity of their ceremonies, the insincerity of their devotion: Of exposing their Ignorance, their Pride, their Ambition, their Avarice. Motives of Interest and Revenge suggested the resolution, in this infernal assembly, of seizing the Holy Jesus, and of putting him to death. A party of their officers and servants was sent immediately to execute the first part of the horrid purpose. Motives of Avarice had prevailed upon the sordid mind of Judas to conspire with his Master's enemies against his life. For a paltry bribe of something less than four pounds, for the sum that the law appointed for damages to the owner of a slave who had been killed accidentally by another man's ox, he conducts the officers of the Great Council to the accustomed place of our Lord's retirement, where Jesus was at this time withdrawn to prepare himself by prayer and meditation, against that trying hour which he knew to be approaching.—Let us once more recur to the words of our Lord's prediction, instructive words, upon which we never can too deeply meditate --He *must* go, he *must* suffer, he *must* be killed.—Whence, and what was this Necessity?—Assuredly no *absolute* Necessity originally seated in the nature of the thing, that the Son of God should suffer. He *might* have left the miserable race of man to perish in their sins.—The Son is in all things, but in nothing more than in Love and Mercy, the express Image of the Father.—Notwithstanding all that man could plead in extenuation of his transgression—and somewhat he *had* to plead---the frailty of his nature--the subtilty of the tempter--yet the purposes of God's moral

moral government rendered it unfit to pardon sin without Intercession and Atonement. Compassion instigates the Son of God to pay the forfeit of our crimes, and to satisfy, in his own person, the Eternal Father's Justice. Impelled by *this* necessity, incited by commiseration of our fallen state, he lays aside the Glory *which he had with the Father before the world began*. In the Virgin's womb he cloaths himself with Flesh, and, together with that mortal cloathing, he assumes Man's perfect nature. A nature subject to our wants and to our pains, not insensible to our enjoyments, susceptible, as appeared in many actions of his Life, of our social attachments, and though pure from the stain of sin, not exempt from the feeling of Temptation. When his hour draws near, this Human Nature shrinks under the apprehension of Pain. He foresees the accumulated Horror of his approaching sufferings. He foresees it with distress and agony.—Where is the wise Disputer of the World, who says, that Pain and Affliction are not Evils? Who, sufficient to himself, indifferent to things external, boasts that he would be unmoved in Calamity, at Ease in Torment?—Bring him to Gethsemane.—There shall he see a Just Man and Perfect—a Man, whose conscience reproaches him with no Vice or Folly—a Man, whose Life hath been Piety and Love—Unaffected Piety, Disinterested Love—a Man, in whose ample Mind are hidden all the Treasures of Knowledge—a Man, assuredly entitled to every comfort, which the consciousness of Perfection, of Perfect Virtue, and of Perfect Wisdom, can bestow. He shall see this Wise, this Good, this Perfect Man, this Man in union with Divinity, overwhelmed with grief and tribulation. *Surely he bears our Grievs, he carries our Sorrows, he undergoes the chastisement of our peace*. See his mortified Looks, his troubled Gestures! See the Bloody Sweat!

Sweat! Strange symptom of the unuttered pangs that rend his righteous heart.---See him Prostrate on the earth in anxious supplication.---Humble Thyself, O vain Philosophy---Dismiss thy arrogant maxims---Learn, from this affecting spectacle, a better Wisdom than Thine Own---Learn it of Him who brought it from above. Say not, that Affliction is not an Evil---Say that it is to be born with Humility, as the Punishment of sin.---To be endured with Fortitude, as the instrument of Good---To be accepted with Thankfulness, as the Discipline of God, whereby he trains his Sons to Virtue, and fits the Virtuous for Glory. But confess that it is That, which the most Perfect Natures do the most abhor; That, which it is the Wisdom of man, with due submission to the dispensations of Providence, to shun.

Our Saviour, in the anguish of his soul, but with perfect resignation to the Father's will, prays that, if possible, the cup of bitterness may pass by him.---The Counsels of God are founded on unerring Wisdom---They cannot be reversed or changed.---The awful Sentence is gone forth, *without Blood there is no Remission.* *Awake O Sword against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.*---Love to Man joined with a Zeal for the honour and support of the Father's government, these Motives, which first engaged him in the painful work of our Redemption, prevail over his Human feelings, and, further fortified by a vision from heaven, he determines to meet the malice of his enemies. And when the officers of the Sanhedrim appear, with Judas at their head, he summons not those legions of angels which were ever in readiness to attend his call, he puts not forth the powers that resided in him, he commands his attendants to sheath the swords already drawn in his defence, he repairs
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the violence that one of them already had committed, and after such rebuke to the traitor, and such expostulations with the officers, as might shew them that he knew every particular of the conspiracy, and was aware of all that was intended, he surrenders himself without resistance; thus verifying the antient prediction, *he was led like a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.*

The Chief-Priests and Elders were unwilling to put him to death by their own authority, lest they should incur the charge of tumult and sedition. For Judæa being at this time a Roman Province, death could not regularly be inflicted without the permission at least of the Roman Governor. And they were desirous of putting the face of Public Justice upon the whole of the transaction. Cool and Crafty in their malice they present him before Pilate, and, urging the complicated charge of Blasphemy and Sedition, insist upon his death. Pilate well understood that both these accusations were groundless. But he was very unpopular in his Province, which he is said to have ruled with a rod of iron. He was given to understand, that, if he stood forth as the friend of Jesus, he would himself incur the accusation of traiterous designs. He took the alarm at this—He saw that complaints might be carried to Rome—He well knew the jealous temper of the Emperor Tiberius, ever ready to listen to complaints against his Provincial governors, cruel and implacable in his resentments—He thought the present opportunity was not to be missed of doing the Jews a pleasure, by throwing away the life, as he conceived, of an inconsiderable friendless man, who, when once he was gone, would never be enquired after—And from these Motives of selfish Cunning and guilty Fear, Pilate,

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against

against the remonstrances of his Conscience and the Warnings of Heaven, consented to our Saviour's death.

The execution of the Roman Governor's sentence fell in course upon the Roman soldiers. And this ensured that particular kind of death, which our Lord had himself predicted. For Crucifixion was not the punishment which the Jewish law appointed for the crimes wherewith Jesus was charged; but it was one which the Romans inflicted upon offenders of the meanest condition, or those who had been guilty of the most atrocious and flagitious crimes. The living body of the sufferer was fastened to two cross-pieces of wood by nails driven through the hands and feet; the feet being nailed to the upright post, and the hands to the two extremities of the transverse beam. In this situation the miserable objects of this barbarous Punishment were left to consume in lingering and dreadful Torments. For as none of the parts essential to life was immediately injured, none of the vital actions immediately impeded, and none of the larger blood-vessels set open, the death was necessarily slow; and the multitude of nerves that terminate in the hands and feet, giving those parts the nicest sensibility, rendered the sufferings exquisite.

Such was the death, to which the unrelenting malice of his enemies consigned the meek and holy Jesus. I must not further pursue the detail of those minute occurrences, in which, though brought about by natural and common causes, the ancient prophecies concerning the circumstances of our Saviour's Passion were remarkably fulfilled. It was not till every tittle was fulfilled, that the patient Son of God, as if then and not before at liberty to depart, said, "It is finished!" bowed his anointed Head, and rendered up the Ghost.—Wonderful Catastrophe!

strophe!---Replete with Mysteries! Among which, the Harmony of Divine Providence and Human Liberty is not the least. Mechanical causes, governed by a single Intellect, could not with more Certainty have wrought the predetermined effect! Independent Beings could not have pursued with greater Liberty, than the persons concerned in this horrid transaction, each his separate design!---"IT IS FINISHED"---Holy Victim! Thy Sufferings are finished!--ALL is finished, that Wicked Men were wonderfully destined to contribute towards the general Deliverance! What remains, Infinite Power and Infinite Mercy shall accomplish. The Disciples, those few of them who had the courage to be present at this dismal scene, hang their heads in sorrowful despondency, and seem to have abandoned the hope, that, *This* was He who should Redeem Israel.---But Israel is Redeemed.---The High Sacrifice, appointed before the foundation of the World, typified in all the sacrifices of the Law, is Now slain, and is accepted. That Jesus, that according to his own prediction hath expired on the cross, shall, according to his own prediction, be raised again on the third day.---He is raised,---He is entered into Glory.---He is sitten down for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high---There he pleads the merit of his Blood, in behalf of those crying sins that caused it to be shed.---Nor does he plead in vain.---The final Judgment is committed to Him; and the greatest of sinners, that will but forsake their evil ways, have no reason to fear the severity of a Judge, who hath himself been touched with the feeling of our infirmities. On the other hand, Let not any deceive themselves with a vain reliance on his Merits, who, after all that the Son of God hath done and suffered for them, remain impenitent. The sacrifice of the Cross was no less a display of the just Severity, than of the tender Mercy of God. The authority of his government must be maintained.

This rendered Intercession and Atonement necessary for the pardon of sin in the first instance—the most meritorious Intercession—the Highest Atonement. For those *who despise so great salvation*, who cannot be reclaimed by the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, by the warnings of God's Wrath, by the assurances of Mercy, by the contemplation of their Saviour's Love, for those who cannot be reclaimed by these powerful motives from obstinate causes of wilful vice, there assuredly *remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of fiery indignation*, which, at the last day, shall burn, with inextinguishable rage, against these incorrigible adversaries of God and Goodness. Grant, O Lord, that all we who are this day assembled before thee, lamenting our Sins, and imploring thy Mercy, may be permitted, through the Intercession of thy Son, to escape the everlasting horrors of that Second Death.



F I N I S.